

CELEBRATING THE GOOD HOUND

(Mr. AUCHINCLOSS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. AUCHINCLOSS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to celebrate Pride Month by recognizing an LGBTQ-owned local business, The Good Hound.

The Good Hound offers off-leash hikes, pet sitting, training, and socialization in my hometown of Newton. I first met owner Shannon Wood when my dog, Donut, joined the group of dogs he helps take care of every day. Every June, we look forward to seeing Donut and all her friends sport pride bandanas as they join Haley for jaunts around our neighborhood.

Pride Month is a time to celebrate the LGBTQ individuals we all know and love who are crucial parts of our communities, economy, and families. Congress must stand up and support small, LGBTQ-owned businesses across the country that serve our constituents every day. My family and Newton as a whole are better for the dedication, cheer, and openness Shannon brings to The Good Hound.

INFLATION

(Mr. GROTHMAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GROTHMAN. Madam Speaker, I want to give a story to my good friends in the press corps because they always feel they have a shortage of interesting things in the paper. This concerns the excessive inflation we have under the current administration.

The current administration claims that inflation last year was 8.6 percent. I am going to focus on two different parts of that, one is 5.5 percent for housing and 16.1 percent for used cars.

I ask the press corps to call some local builders or builders anywhere around the country—builders, landlords, and assessors—and see if you can find anybody who thinks the cost of housing has only gone up by 5.5 percent in the past year. My goodness, the cost of interest by itself has almost doubled in that time. The cost of many parts of a house has gone up. There is no way that it is only 5.5 percent. I think if you look around and ask builders and Realtors, they will laugh at that number.

I would also ask you to call some car dealers around the country and see what they think about the idea that used cars have gone up 16.1 percent in the last year. They, as well, laugh at that. The number has to be significantly higher.

So there is a gift to my friends in the news business.

CELEBRATING JUNETEENTH

(Ms. PRESSLEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. PRESSLEY. Madam Speaker, my family and I have celebrated

Juneteenth for decades, but this year marks only the second year that Juneteenth will be observed as a Federal holiday.

Some may wonder what is the significance of this day and why is national recognition long overdue and notable?

It matters, because as we celebrate Juneteenth—the emancipation of my enslaved ancestors—it is a truth-telling reminder of our Nation's history and founding, but also of what is possible.

When enslaved Black people and allies began the work of abolition, many considered the goal of freedom an improbable or impossible one, but because of their imaginations and sacrifice it did happen.

While we recognize that our fight for equity and justice continues today, on this day, we celebrate the Black family, our culture, our melanin, our resilience, our brilliance, and our joy. We affirm our humanity. We are more than hashtags, sobering statistics, deficits, disparities, and gaps. We are more than our labor, the resistance, and justice-seekers.

From the heart of Texas to kitchen tables in Roxbury, we celebrate the dedicated coalition of Black folks who organize to make this celebration a Federal holiday.

Black lives matter. Black healing matters. Black joy matters. Happy Juneteenth.

HONORING JEFFREY SHERWIN

(Mr. GARCÍA of Illinois asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GARCÍA of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Mayor Jeffrey Sherwin of the city of Northlake, Illinois for 25 years of service to that city.

Mayor Sherwin, a lifelong resident of Northlake and Leyden Eagle, has dedicated his life to public service.

Prior to becoming mayor in 1997, he served as trustee for Northlake Public Library and Northlake Fire Protection District.

As mayor, he has worked tirelessly to transform the community by putting education, housing, infrastructure, and protecting the environment at the forefront of his effort.

Mayor Sherwin built senior housing, established many new green and recreational spaces, and restored wetlands.

In celebration of 25 years of service, today, we thank Mayor Jeffrey Sherwin for his career of service.

HELP FEED OUR KIDS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2021, the gentlewoman from Minnesota (Ms. OMAR) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. OMAR. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members

have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include any extraneous material on the subject of this Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Minnesota?

There was no objection.

Ms. OMAR. Madam Speaker, we are on the brink of a hunger crisis, both here in the United States and around the globe. Right now, more than 38 million people, including 12 million children, are food insecure in the United States.

Food prices are expected to rise up to 7.5 percent this year, stretching already tight family budgets.

In my home State of Minnesota, dozens of hunger relief organizations are warning of the hungriest summer on record if the State doesn't convene a special session to combat hunger.

At the beginning of the pandemic, I passed the MEALS Act to let districts provide universal meals in the hope of preventing a massive hunger crisis. It worked. Over 30 million kids are now estimated to receive school meals.

In August 2020, when the waivers were on the verge of expiring, Representative PINGREE and I joined 119 of our colleagues in sending a letter to the Secretary of Agriculture urging him to extend the school meal waivers.

Throughout the pandemic, I sent three letters and worked tirelessly to ensure every child can eat. Though we were able to secure these critical waiver extensions, the uncertainty cost millions of families and school administrators to panic and stress.

Now, we find ourselves in a familiar place where at the end of this month—in just 15 days—millions of children are again at risk of going hungry as the school meal waivers are set to expire.

Let me be clear: We cannot let these lifesaving waivers lapse as the pandemic rages on. I am working with the Education and Labor Committee and leadership to ensure that our children are continuing to be fed.

But we can't stop there. We need permanent solutions. As a former community nutrition educator, childhood hunger is an issue I know all too well. That is why one of the first bills I introduced after I was sworn in was the Universal School Meals Program Act with Senators Sanders and Gillibrand.

My bill would provide free breakfast, lunch, and dinner to every student and eliminate school meal debt. No child in the wealthiest country in the world should experience food insecurity. We here in the United States must lead to end child hunger here at home and we must continue to lead to stop this global hunger crisis.

Every night up to 811 million people around the globe go to bed hungry. Of the 811 million, 276 million people are facing acute food insecurity and about 50 million people are facing what the U.N. World Food Programme describes as "emergency levels of hunger."

While the United States has provided \$2.6 billion to help other countries with

food shortages, we need other countries to step up and do their part. With 49 million people around the world on the verge of famine, we need to rally all leaders to increase the supply of food and fertilizers; support basic safety nets for those without food; and fund humanitarian operations to reduce famine and hunger.

We have to remember what got us to this point: Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine has disrupted exports from two of the world's biggest wheat producers making wheat unaffordable and unattainable for millions.

Right now, India, Argentina, Australia, and Canada collectively have the power to make up for most of the wheat lost due to the war or the restrictions that are being created by some other countries. That is why we need countries around the world to step up and do their part to combat the wheat shortage, which is especially being felt in the Horn of Africa.

The U.N. has warned about the imminent "explosion of child deaths" due to food insecurity and malnutrition in the Horn of Africa. In Somalia, 29 percent of children are experiencing acute malnutrition. About 7 million livestock in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia have died since last fall due to widespread drought.

This food crisis in the Horn of Africa and all parts of the globe will only get worse unless we take steps to stop this catastrophe from taking hold.

We have to act to address the nexus of inflation, war, and climate change. Now is the time to act.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from New Mexico (Ms. STANSBURY).

Ms. STANSBURY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to urge this body to pass urgent legislation to help feed our children.

If we do not act, millions of children across the United States and across New Mexico will lose access to vital school meals—breakfast and lunches that are helping to address an epidemic of food insecurity that is impacting every single corner of our State and our country.

Food insecurity has many faces. Like so many children from New Mexico, I was a school lunch kid. I qualified for 100 percent free and reduced-price lunch throughout my entire childhood. In fact, one in four children in New Mexico are facing food insecurity and hunger, and for many of these kids, school meals are the only reliable meal of the day.

In New Mexico food is the center of our cultures, of our families, of our ways of life, and yet, so many of our families are struggling every single day to put food on the table.

For every family food insecurity looks different. It may mean skipping meals, not being able to buy groceries every week, relying on school lunches in order to feed children, and getting help from a local food pantry and a local food bank.

In many cases, we know the pandemic has caused our families to struggle even more, made the situation worse, intensified food and hunger insecurity across our Nation, and that is why the work of this body here in Congress to expand funding for nutrition programs to extend these waivers and include school meals for every child in America is quite literally a lifeline for our families and for our children.

If Congress, and especially the Senate, do not act, millions of children across America will actually lose access to school meals that have carried them through the pandemic. This comes as our Nation is grappling with disruptions to supply chains, inflation, rising costs, and putting stresses on families across our country.

In exactly one month—days from now—our country will be facing a hunger cliff as Federal waivers for school meals are set to expire and children will lose access to 95 million meals across the country this summer.

I have worked on food and hunger issues across my entire public policy career. In New Mexico, we are working every day to reimagine our food systems, to lift up our State's diverse and crucial food and agriculture traditions and support our families who are struggling.

As a State legislator, I was deeply proud to partner with our Governor and my colleagues in the State house and hunger advocates and agricultural entities across the State to address food insecurity and to pass a bill to end school meal copays.

Here in Congress, I am proud to continue this work alongside antihunger champions like yourself, Madam Speaker, and as part of the Hunger Caucus led by Chairman MCGOVERN.

I am also proud to cosponsor H.R. 3115, the Universal School Meals Program Act, which would address this crisis permanently by providing three locally sourced meals a day to every school child in America.

The time to act is now. Our kids are counting on us. During the pandemic, Congress made a game-changing decision—to feed all children without barriers, without bureaucratic obstacles.

This is about the dignity and well-being of our families and meeting the most basic needs of our children.

We have the opportunity to chart a new path forward for our country. Will we decide to be a nation that lets our kids go hungry or will we decide to be a nation where no child should ever have to experience food insecurity again?

This is the choice facing this body, and this, Madam Speaker, is why we must extend school meals.

□ 1630

Ms. OMAR. Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. ADAMS).

Ms. ADAMS. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding and her great work.

Madam Speaker, I rise today to address the hunger crisis in our communities and in our schools.

Millions of children will go hungry on June 30, just 2 weeks from now, if we fail to act. Let me say that again for anyone who may not have heard me. Millions of children will go hungry on June 30 if we do not act.

Madam Speaker, I include in the RECORD an article from the Charlotte Observer outlining how the children in my district will be affected.

NO MORE FREE LUNCH FOR SOME CMS STUDENTS STARTING NEXT YEAR

(By Anna Maria Della Costa)

A program that has provided free meals to K-12 students in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools will stop at the end of this school year.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's universally free school meals arose out of pandemic-era waivers that allowed all K-12 students to get school breakfast and lunch at no cost regardless of their family's income beginning in March 2020. Those waivers are set to expire June 30, despite school nutrition advocates urging Congress for an extension in the federal 2022 spending bill.

School meal programs will return to pre-pandemic procedures for the 2022-23 school year, which means free breakfast continues and lunch may not.

"I just want to remind everybody, it's the U.S. Department of Agriculture that this falls under, this is not the CMS Board of Education trying to give everybody a tough time on free and reduced lunch," Interim Superintendent Hugh Hattabaugh said during the board's meeting Tuesday. "We were hopeful that maybe the bill that was set forward would be approved, but it was not extended out."

IN CMS, BREAKFAST WILL STILL BE FREE FOR ALL STUDENTS

Cassie Fambro, a media relations specialist with CMS, told the Observer that breakfast will continue to be provided in all of the district's schools at no charge for the 2022-23 school year. For each of CMS' summer camps and programs, free breakfast and lunch also will be provided.

CMS will not raise lunch meal prices for 2022-23, keeping them at pre-pandemic rates for students. For pre-K students, the lunch meal price is \$2.50; K-8 students pay \$2.75 and 9-12 students pay \$3. The reduced price lunch meal is 40 cents.

PARENTS: FILL OUT THE PAPERWORK

Students attending some CMS schools will have to qualify for free or reduced-price lunch through direct certification, which could include families receiving food stamps, students who are homeless or foster children. Students can also receive free meals from an approved free or reduced-price meal benefit application.

Students not approved for free lunch will need to have cash or money on account to pay for lunch. Fambro said.

Applications will be available online or on paper beginning August 1.

"We're not going to let any child walk away without a meal," Hattabaugh said. "We need help from parents and the community to assist everybody."

Board member Margaret Marshall said it's concerning that the waiver is not going to be extended.

"We're going to have a lot of families who if they don't qualify and fill out paperwork are going to have some problems with food this year," Marshall said. "Make sure families fill out the paperwork so we can have

the funds to feed those students and they won't rack up meal debt which has to come due at some point. This is really important."

68 CMS SCHOOLS NOT AFFECTED

CMS has 68 schools that fall into the Community Eligibility Provision, an option for schools and districts in low-income areas. The program allows schools to serve meals at no charge to all enrolled students, and families do not have to fill out an application.

Hattabaugh said these schools will not be affected by the change in meal service.

"They will still have what they had during the pandemic," he said.

The following CMS schools are in the Community Eligibility Provision:

Albemarle Road Elementary, Albemarle Road Middle, Allenbrook Elementary, Ashley Park (K-8), Charles Parker Academic Center, Berryhill School, Briarwood Elementary, Bruns Avenue Elementary, Walter G. Byers School, Charlotte East Language Academy, Cochrane Collegiate Academy, Coulwood STEM Academy, David Cox Road Elementary, Devonshire Elementary, Druid Hills Academy, Eastway Middle, First Ward Creative Arts Academy, Garinger High, Greenway Park Elementary, Joseph W. Grier Academy, J.H. Gunn Elementary, Harding University High, Hickory Grove Elementary, Hidden Valley Elementary, Highland Renaissance Academy, Hornets Nest Elementary.

Idlewild Elementary, Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle, Lawrence Orr Elementary, Lebanon Road Elementary, Charlotte Mecklenburg Academy, Marie G. Davis (K-8), James Martin Middle, McClintock Middle, Merry Oaks International Academy, Montclair Elementary, Nations Ford Elementary, Newell Elementary, Oakdale Elementary, Oakhurst STEAM Elementary, Paw Creek Elementary, Pinewood Elementary, Piney Grove Elementary, Rama Road Elementary.

Ranson Middle, Reid Park Academy, Renaissance West STEAM Academy, Sedgefield Middle, Shamrock Gardens Elementary, Statesville Road Elementary, Sterling Elementary, Stoney Creek Elementary, Thomasboro Academy, Tuckaseegee Elementary, Turning Point Academy, University Meadows Elementary, University Park Creative Arts Elementary, Julius L. Chambers High, Villa Heights Elementary, West Charlotte High, West Mecklenburg High, Westerly Hills Academy, Whitewater Academy, Whitewater Middle, Wilson STEM Academy, Winding Springs Elementary, Windsor Park Elementary, Winterfield Elementary.

Ms. ADAMS. Madam Speaker, at the beginning of the pandemic, this body authorized waivers to help make it easier for schools to offer meals to kids, and we gave access to healthy, nutritious foods to 10 million more school-age children because finding reliable food sources became a problem.

In case my Republican friends need a reminder, President Trump signed that legislation into law. Even as the pandemic continues and food prices are on the rise, these waivers are set to expire at the end of the month.

As a 40-year educator, I know that hunger has been a crisis in our schools and our communities since long before the pandemic. That is also why when I came to Congress, I founded the Adams Hunger Initiative to help coordinate the response to the hunger crisis in my community, and why hunger has been one of my top priority issues in Congress.

In my home State of North Carolina, food insecurity has been a tragic fact

of life for our kids and our students. In fact, I just heard from members of the North Carolina PTA today about their ever-present concerns about food insecurity and how it will impact our students.

In 2018, 441,000 North Carolina children participated in SNAP, and 207,351 residents participated in the Women, Infants, and Children program, or WIC. In 2019, 92,010 students participated in the summer food service program. Almost 100,000 students needed help from their school, so they didn't go hungry—again, that was before the pandemic.

In Charlotte, the hunger crisis led at least 24 elementary, middle, and high schools in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District to open food pantries to serve students in need during summer breaks and the vacation.

For example, at Windsor Park Elementary in east Charlotte, members of the Windsor Park Neighborhood Association donated food to keep the shelves stocked for scores of food-insecure and housing-insecure children.

In west Charlotte, University Park Creative Arts School is restocked on a regular basis by Friendship Missionary Baptist Church, and thanks to local donors it has a refrigerator and a large freezer to offer diverse options for students and families. The need is real, and it is staring us in the face.

It is also important to note that these two schools, along with 66 other local schools that will fall into the Community Eligibility Provision, will still be able to offer meals and food to students at the same levels of service as the past 2 years.

However, approximately 114 of our district's schools are not eligible for that provision, meaning that access to summer nutrition will become a patchwork. When students return at the end of the summer, fewer students will get the meals that they need.

Our choice is clear: we can choose to act, or we can let millions of children go hungry. As always, I am standing with our students.

Madam Speaker, I thank Congresswoman OMAR and the Congressional Progressive Caucus for hosting this important Special Order hour tonight.

Ms. OMAR. Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN), who also chairs the Caucus on Hunger.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Madam Speaker, I thank my friend from Minnesota, Congresswoman OMAR, for leading this Special Order hour, at such a critical time for our Nation's children.

Congresswoman OMAR has been a champion for expanding access to universal school meals and ending childhood hunger, and indeed, all hunger in this country and around the globe, and I recognize her for her leadership.

Madam Speaker, my two sisters are schoolteachers in the Worcester public school system in Massachusetts. They remind me all the time that school meals are as important to a child's ability to learn as a textbook or a

laptop. They wonder all the time why Congress, State governments, and the Federal Government don't get that.

They see children show up to school on Mondays hungry because they haven't eaten all weekend. It takes a while to get them the nutrition that they need so they can focus again. If you are hungry, you can't focus. If you can't focus, you can't learn. If you can't learn, you fall behind. It is that simple.

They also tell me that Fridays are a tough day because those same children come to them and ask if there is any food that they can take home, not just for them but for their families. I have heard heartbreaking story after heartbreaking story of children who are food insecure, who are hungry in this country.

If you ever meet a child or see a child who is hungry, it breaks your heart. It, quite frankly, angers me because we live in the richest country in the history of the world. Even before the pandemic, close to 40 million Americans didn't know where their next meal was going to come from.

I tell people all the time that hunger is a political condition. It is not a partisan condition. It shouldn't be a partisan condition. It is a political condition. By that I mean we have the food, we have the resources, we have the infrastructure, we have the knowledge of what we need to do. We have everything but the political will.

As has been pointed out here today, we are about to reach a hunger cliff at the end of June. Waivers are going to run out. Money is going to run out. If we don't do something, millions and millions of children will lose their school meals and will lose their summer meals as well.

During the pandemic, thankfully, schools received flexibility and funding to make sure their students got a healthy breakfast and lunch at school. This has been a lifeline for families and school districts facing rising costs and supply chain shortages.

We are coming to an end. All those safety measures that were put in place during the pandemic will expire. I think what we are coming to appreciate is that those safety measures should have been in place even if there wasn't a pandemic. We can't go back to the days when close to 13 million kids went to bed hungry every night in the country.

With the group of leaders who are here on the floor, members of the Progressive Caucus, as well as working with Speaker PELOSI, Chairman BOBBY SCOTT, Chairwoman ROSA DELAURIO, and working with Chairwoman STABENOW over in the Senate, we have been trying to figure out ways to extend the flexibility and funding needed to get healthy food to America's students.

I believe that we will get there. The amazing leadership of Speaker PELOSI will get us all together and we will find a way forward. We will avoid this hunger cliff.

Madam Speaker, I am a liberal Democrat. I serve in this Congress, both in the House and Senate, with many conservative Republicans, and I understand that not everybody agrees on everything here. For example, I want free universal school meals for every kid to be part of our educational policy, and I want it there forever. I commend States like California, Vermont, and Maine for taking a lead in their States. Their legislatures have passed universal meals for their students. I want Massachusetts to follow. I want every State to follow.

I get it. Not everybody shares my view. I also get that in order to get anything to the President's desk we are going to have to navigate through the Senate, which is always a challenge because in the Senate you need 60 votes to have a cup of coffee, never mind pass a piece of legislation.

We are going to have to figure out what it is we can get done in the next couple of weeks. There are some who don't want as big a package as others. There are some who are insisting on offsets. There are some who are insisting on other things. We have to figure it out. We are going to have figure it out because our kids are important. They are 100 percent of our future, and we ought to treat them as such.

Finally, one last point. America used to think big about solving problems like hunger. In 1969, we held the first and only White House Conference on Hunger. It was the same year we landed on the moon. That conference led to a major expansion of the school lunch program and the creation of the Women, Infants, and Children program, among other things.

As a proud member of the Progressive Caucus, I have long thought that it is time for America to think big once again to solve problems like hunger. To think big the way we used to, not to manage problems, but to solve them. We have the food to end child hunger in America.

Again, it is a matter of building the political will. I personally believe that food ought to be a fundamental human right here in this country and around the world. I say this because I am thrilled that President Biden recently announced that he will host a White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health to bring together experts from across the country, and all agencies within the Federal Government to create a plan, not to manage hunger in America, to end hunger in America.

It will be an opportunity for people with lived experiences to have their voices heard because sometimes we make decisions here and we don't talk to the people who are most affected by what we are trying to do.

We have the opportunity to prevent child hunger and to make universal free school meals a reality. This is our moment to make it happen. In the lead-up to this conference, Members of Congress have the opportunity to host

listening sessions to hear directly from local educators and families who benefit from free school meals.

I encourage my colleagues to host these sessions and to transmit their findings to the White House so that the recommendations that come out of this conference reflect the power of school meals to change lives and improve nutrition among children.

Madam Speaker, I encourage not just progressive Members, I encourage moderate Members, and conservative Members to do listening sessions in their districts to hear about not only the extent of this problem, which is a costly problem, but hear about potential solutions so we can end hunger. If you are interested, you can reach out to my office, and we can point you in the right direction.

Madam Speaker, I, again, thank Congresswoman OMAR for bringing us together at such a critical moment. There are some problems that we are faced with that I don't know what the solution is, but hunger is not one of them. This is a solvable problem that we can solve in a matter of a few years if we put our minds to it and if we work together.

Let's do something big, something bold, something that will reflect the goodness of the people of this country and make a real difference. It may be an example for the rest of the world.

□ 1645

Ms. OMAR. Madam Speaker, I thank the chairman for his remarks.

The chairman is right that when we invest in our children, who are assets to our future, it pays dividends. It is important that we recognize that it shouldn't be a partisan issue to want to feed the bellies of our children before we try to feed their brains. We know from study after study that kids do better in school when they are fed. When they have adequate nutrition, they show up to school much more ready to learn, and their behavior in itself is much different.

Example after example, we found, as we looked into this, schoolwide free meals improve math performance in districts where relatively few students qualify under the income-based programs Brookings found. A study found that students in schools with universal school meals fare better on tests than their peers without these meals. That is according to Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University.

The nutrition quality of school meals has improved. Students with universal school meal programs are being offered more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. That means that they are getting the nutrients that will help with their development. New York City, where there have been universal school meals, a study found that regardless of poverty status, the universal school meals program improved students' perception of bullying, fighting, and safety at their schools.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. BOWMAN).

Mr. BOWMAN. Madam Speaker, I thank Congresswoman OMAR for continuing to be a champion on this issue, and I thank the Congresswoman for being here this evening.

As it was said before, we are the wealthiest nation on Earth. We should be able to feed every child and every person, period, point-blank. We have the resources—financial, natural, and intellectual—to help feed every child on the planet. The fact that we are choosing not to do so is a policy choice. It is not a choice based on a lack of resources.

As we focus on school lunches and children in our schools, we often talk about education. The conversation that has been happening over the last several decades is a conversation that focuses on something called the achievement gap.

We often look at the achievement gap through the lens of race. We say that Black and Latino students are outperformed by their White and Asian counterparts. What we don't often talk about is the achievement gap through the lens of economic distress and poverty.

What we know is children who suffer from poverty and live in poverty do more poorly in school than their middle-class and upper-middle-class counterparts. Poverty is obviously related to food insecurity and hunger.

Poverty and everything that comes with it is a complex trauma. Hunger is also a complex trauma. Children will not thrive in a school setting if we continue to allow them to be hungry.

This is not just about their academic performance. This is about their physical development. This is also about their social and emotional development as well. It is also about their mental health both in school and out of school.

This is not something that is only confined to what happens in our schools. We have to look at, consider, and think about what happens in their post-graduation environment. Children who are hungry and children who suffer from the complex traumas that I mentioned before will have lower or less positive health and economic outcomes over the course of their lives.

It is our duty and responsibility as the United States Government, with the power of the purse and the power of the intellectual and natural resources, to make sure we have preschool lunches in our schools and to make sure our children are fed.

I also want to mention a few other components that take place in schools that we don't often talk about as it relates to school lunches, poverty, and hunger. When we look at the school-to-prison pipeline, when we look at school suspensions, and when we look at school expulsions, when we look at these things, when we look at who is placed in special education, these are children who come from challenging

circumstances rooted in poverty and also rooted in hunger and the trauma in their communities and in their homes.

Again, it is our duty and responsibility to get this done. To use language used by some of my more conservative colleagues, this is a national security issue because if we are not feeding our children, then we are not educating our children. If we are not educating our children, then we do not have a healthy society and we do not have a healthy democracy.

The well-being of our children is a pillar of our country going forward, and in order for them to receive the nourishment and education that they need, we must make sure they are fed and fed well and are not food insecure.

Ms. OMAR. Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Massachusetts (Ms. PRESSLEY).

Ms. PRESSLEY. Madam Speaker, I thank Representative OMAR for bringing us together this afternoon and for her steadfast leadership on the issue of hunger and food insecurity, an issue that she has been leading on since she was in the Minnesota State Legislature. We are grateful for her shining a light consistently on this and the need for us to address rising hunger and its impact on communities here and around the globe.

Madam Speaker, across Massachusetts' Seventh District and across the Nation, families are facing unprecedented levels of food insecurity. I am reminded of the words of Coretta Scott King, who said: "Starving a child is violence. Neglecting schoolchildren is violence."

We can, in fact, do something about this violence.

I am picking up on the words of Congressman MCGOVERN, a global champion in the fight against hunger and food insecurity, when he said that we should stop managing problems and solve them. This is a solvable problem.

A recent survey by the Greater Boston Food Bank found that nearly 2 million adults across the Commonwealth struggled to get enough to eat last year. It was Black, Latinx, and LGBTQ people and their families with children who were most likely to struggle.

No one should know hunger. No parent should know the heartache of putting their baby to sleep with an empty belly.

Our communities were already in the midst of a hunger crisis, one that we knew would be exacerbated by the pandemic. In response, my congressional colleagues and I acted to provide critical resources and flexibilities to support schools and communities in serving and meeting the needs of families and children in need. Schools across the Nation were able to keep school meal programs afloat while providing free meals to an additional 10 million students each day.

Boston Public Schools, the largest school district in my district, was able to serve over 330,000 students with free

breakfasts and lunches across all city neighborhoods.

For many families, these meals were the only reliable source of nutrition throughout the day. They were a saving grace and a lifeline for families across my district and across the Nation, Madam Speaker.

In less than 2 weeks, these school lunch flexibilities are set to expire. We must act with urgency to avoid a hunger cliff that will fall hardest on our most vulnerable children. We must act to avoid a scenario where children will face a loss of 95 million meals over the course of the summer alone.

States and districts have been sounding the alarm. It was these calls from the community that prompted my colleagues, Representatives MCGOVERN, LEE, and me, to send an urgent letter to House and Senate leaders, 1 month ago now, urging them to do everything in their power to extend these essential lifelines. Senate Minority Leader MCCONNELL continues to block efforts to get this done. It is shameful yet unsurprising.

In one of the richest nations in the world, it is an absolute disgrace that millions of children struggle with food insecurity every single day. The clock is running out, and we have a mandate and a duty to get this done.

To my Republican colleagues, I urge them to join us in getting this done. Children, families, and school district leaders across the Nation simply cannot wait.

Once again, I thank my sister in service, Representative OMAR, for her steadfast leadership.

Ms. OMAR. Madam Speaker, I thank Representative PRESSLEY for her remarks.

Madam Speaker, I want for us to zoom out a little bit when we think about the kind of poverty that exists in our country.

There are 37.2 million Americans who live in poverty. As I have stated earlier, we have 38 million people, including 12 million children, who are food insecure.

One in 25 households in the U.S. experience very low food security, where families regularly skip meals because they can't afford more food.

One in 15 U.S. seniors faces hunger. That is 5.2 million seniors who are food insecure.

Madam Speaker, 2.1 million households living in rural communities face hunger. Americans living in rural communities face hunger at higher rates than those in urban areas, and BIPOC communities are especially hard-hit by hunger. Rural communities make up to 63 percent of the counties in the U.S. and 91 percent of counties with the highest rates of overall food insecurity.

In 2019, SNAP and school meals lifted 3.2 million people out of poverty.

If we just look at Minnesota alone, 432,000 people are facing hunger, and of them, 147,000 are children. That is 1 in 13 people and 1 in 9 children who face hunger in Minnesota.

In April 2022, Minnesotans made 463,000 visits to their food shelves. That is a 70 percent increase compared to April 2021.

Since January 2022, food shelf visits statewide have increased by 39 percent.

Madam Speaker, 2021 was the first year since 2014 that Minnesota didn't see an annual increase in food shelf visits. The reason for that, Madam Speaker, is because of the pandemic relief programs.

We heard from so many people from across Minnesota and across the country, and I would just like to share some of their stories on how some of these pandemic relief programs have helped them.

Eric from Willmar, Minnesota, recently shared how he struggles to provide for himself and his siblings. Right before the pandemic, his mother passed away, and he became the legal guardian of his younger siblings. Concerned about providing enough food to eat, he was grateful for the meals his siblings could get at school because of the MEALS Act.

Amber, a mother from Duluth, Minnesota, shared how putting four kids through school has been a financial struggle. Both she and her husband work, making just above the threshold to qualify for the traditional free lunches. When my bill was passed out of the House, the MEALS Act allowed schools to provide school meals to all students, including Amber's four children, and she called it "godsent and a blessing."

Yesterday, we got an email from a school food service director for a group of 16 school districts in upstate central New York.

She wrote: "It has been an incredibly difficult few years for school food service with supply chain issues, rising costs of food, virtue, hybrid schedules, different serving models, labor shortages . . . but it has been a joy and privilege to see the direct impact of serving breakfast and lunch for free to all students."

"Our program has grown from serving about 1,500 breakfasts and 5,600 lunches pre-pandemic to 3,500 breakfasts and 7,500 lunches per day this school year. The stigma of free meals is gone since we are serving all students on a truly even playing field."

She went on to say: "The end of the child nutrition waivers, most significantly the one that allows free meals for all students, will be a crushing blow to our program, our students, and our communities."

□ 1700

"Families have come to appreciate and rely on the free meals," she says. "We anticipate spending the next year having to have hard conversations with upset parents who are struggling to pay their account balances."

"The argument that students who really need it can apply for free and reduced meals just doesn't cut it. There is a huge gap between the income

guidelines and truly being able to cover all of life's expenses, including school meals.

"Our school nutrition program, students, and community thrived with universal free meals. Without them, the future looks dim."

That is why we are urgently asking Minority Leader MITCH MCCONNELL to not allow for these waivers to lapse. It is detrimental for us not to act and do the right thing.

We also heard from a registered dietitian and the food service director for a small rural school district. She wrote: "Our enrollment pre-K-12 is only 660 students, but well over half of them live in food-insecure homes. Prior to the waivers, in February of 2020, only 20 percent of our youngest students in pre-K-6 ate breakfast with us.

"They would come in from the buses separate from their peers, singled out as 'free breakfast kids' while the others waited to start their day. . . . The last 2½ years has seen a sea change for our tiny school district.

"Due to free meals for all, we are able to transition our students starting in September 2020 to a Breakfast in the Classroom Program. Every day, they have a choice of the hot, nutritious meal of the day or cereal, both options served with fruit and ice-cold milk.

"Students take menus home at the beginning of the month, decide on which days they would like what meals. Teachers work collaboratively with the food service department to preorder breakfast daily. . . . Our breakfast participation has skyrocketed from 20 percent in February 2020 to 85 percent as of Friday of last week. Our numbers continue to grow. And even better? Eating breakfast together as a school community has become part of the woven fabric of our little district. . . . What will September look like without these waivers?" she asks.

"It will be heartbreaking. . . . With the inflation we have seen reflected in grocery store prices, some of these students may well come to school with empty bellies. We will lose the sense of community, solidarity, and unity we have built over these past 2½ years. The stigma of 'needing help' will be stamped upon the kids who are lucky enough to qualify while many others slip through the cracks, unlucky to have adults in their households who make enough to disqualify them from receiving benefits but poor enough to struggle as they balance \$5 per gallon gasoline, food, and increased rent.

"We are literally begging all of you in Congress to please help us keep our kids fed. So many of them depend upon us. As we know, it is so hard to learn on an empty stomach."

I will end with where I started. This is a crisis. As I have always said, as someone who has lived in a war-engulfed country, who has lived in a refugee camp, who has experienced what severe hunger can look like for a child who doesn't have access to food, it is

baffling to me that we see some of these stories coming out of communities here in the United States, in one of the wealthiest countries in the world.

If we truly care about our children, and if we truly care about building a future generation that is ready to lead in our country, we have to care about getting them educated and ready. You cannot feed the brains of children if their bellies are not fed. We must act, and we must act now.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

INFLATION AND OUR ECONOMY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2021, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. JOHNSON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Louisiana?

There was no objection.

Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana. Madam Speaker, Democrats have enjoyed unilateral control of Washington for the last 17 months, and we all know the results: record inflation, soaring gas prices, unhinged crime in our cities, and uninhibited illegal immigration.

In the midst of all this, what issue gets their prime-time billing? Very simple. They are displaying their seething hatred for Donald Trump and anybody who ever supported him.

For nearly a year now, they have invested thousands of hours, millions upon millions of taxpayer dollars. They have interviewed hundreds and hundreds of witnesses. They compiled 100,000 pages of documents. They hired lawyers, consultants, and even big network TV producers. And all for what?

They are doing this production, this rehash, this replay of a moment-by-moment dissection of a terrible event that took place here a year and a half ago. They thought the American people would be riveted by their production, but the ratings have proven what everybody already knew. The American people have lived through all this, and they have moved on.

In fact, we thought it was interesting, according to one report, CBS' decision to bump a "Young Sheldon" rerun from its prime-time slot in favor of Thursday's January 6 hearing resulted in fewer viewers than the identical time slot the prior week. Reruns of "Young Sheldon" played better than the January 6 drama.

The American people have moved on. They have moved on to caring about things that actually affect their daily lives.

Look, the criminals involved in January 6 are being prosecuted. Lessons about Capitol security were learned here. We will never know the true facts about all that, of course, because Speaker PELOSI's partisan committee will not look into why we didn't have adequate security here.

But the Senate produced a bipartisan report on all these events a year ago. The truth is the Democrats could hire an army of broadcast media executives and specialists to try to boost their ratings, but it will not change the simple facts.

The election this fall is going to be about three things. It is going to be about inflation, immigration, and incompetence, the staggering levels of incompetence that the Democrats in charge of Washington put on display here every single day.

If the Democrats want to reverse their political fortunes, they need to reverse their policies. But we all know, of course, they refuse to do that. So hardworking American families will continue, very sadly, to struggle as our country becomes less safe, less secure, and less stable by the hour.

I am grateful to my colleagues for joining me tonight to discuss the myriad crises facing our country. They are all taking a back seat to the Democrats' reality show, but we think it is important to point out to the American people the realities here, the true realities of what is happening and what we are facing as a country, these unprecedented challenges.

Madam Speaker, I yield first to the fine gentleman from the State of Pennsylvania (Mr. KELLER).

Mr. KELLER. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Louisiana for hosting this Special Order.

Madam Speaker, this week, President Biden visited Philadelphia and attempted to spin a narrative fully detached from the reality Americans face every day. Speaking to a group of labor unions, the President professed to be advancing a pro-worker agenda. He proclaimed, "We are changing people's lives."

Well, he is right, only not for the better. Inflation is at a 40-year high, costing Pennsylvania families an additional \$517 more per month.

Gas prices are above \$5 a gallon, forcing families to spend \$2,800 more at the pump than last year.

Pennsylvanians are smart, hard-working people. They know that they are not better off today than they were just 18 short months ago.

While the President continues to blame Republicans in Congress for the economic disaster he has created, the fact remains that Democrats control the House, the Senate, and the White House. If the President truly cared about stopping skyrocketing inflation, he would stop calling for more out-of-control spending, stop shutting down American energy production, and stop blaming others for his failures.

It is time that he has faith in the American people and gets out of the way.